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STATE FOR EUR/UMB

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PBTS](#) [ECON](#) [RS](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE LUPU DISCUSSES
ELECTORAL CHANCES WITH DAS RUSSELL

Classified by: Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a November 19 meeting with visiting EUR DAS Russell, presidential candidate Marian Lupu articulated his philosophy that Moldova could serve as a bridge between East and West. With regard to his electoral prospects, he said he "could not rule out" the possibility that he would garner the needed votes from Communist Party MPs (PCRM). Should he fail to be elected, Lupu said he opposed Acting President Ghimpu's idea of introducing a new Constitution, suggesting that it would be better to have a referendum to either change the number of votes needed in Parliament to elect a President or to introduce direct popular voting for the President. Andrei Popov, who accompanied Lupu, complained that the other Alliance for European Integration (AIE) leaders were not being proactive in supporting Lupu as candidate for President. End Summary.

Balance East and West while Developing Economy

¶2. (C) Lupu opened his November 19 meeting with DAS Russell by explaining his views on the need for Moldova to pursue a balanced approach between East and West. Moldova should not have to choose between East and West in an "either-or" fashion, he said, but rather should take an "and-and" approach to become a bridge between the two. In addition, achieving greater European integration did not eliminate the need for strong relations with the East, he argued. Moldova's energy sources, foreign trade and most important markets all lay in Russia, he said, so Moldova needed an intelligent strategy for maintaining the advantages it gained from existing relations in the CIS, while also growing closer to the West.

¶3. (C) According to Lupu, Moldova should keep its economic relations with CIS partners, while simultaneously diversifying the structure of its economy. For too many years the wine sector had been the mainstay of Moldova's economy, he argued. Moldova now needed to develop new areas, such as in high added value sectors, predominantly in the service sector, in order to take advantage of Moldova's geographic position and attract more foreign direct investment.

Seeking Eight Votes to Become Moldova's President

¶4. (C) Lupu then turned to the burning political question of the day: whether or not he would garner the eight votes needed to become Moldova's

next President. He noted that there were two possibilities for him to be elected -- either that there would be a general decision on the part of the Party of Communists to provide the votes, or that a group of at least eight MPs would break away from the PCRM and vote for him. A third scenario was that the Communists would boycott the vote altogether.

15. (C) Lupu also said he was concerned that if the Alliance was not successful in its work, the PCRM would return to power. He was therefore simultaneously lobbying the PCRM to vote for him and lobbying select PCRM MPs to break ranks to support him. Despite the difficulties, Lupu said that the possibility of persuading the PCRM to vote for him "could not be excluded." Though Voronin had publicly opposed this option, Lupu noted that the ex-President was "capricious" and could "hold one opinion in the morning and a different one in the evening." Lupu also said he was meeting every day with members of the PCRM faction to convince them to vote for him.

New Constitution: Pandora's Box

16. (C) Lupu added that should his election fail, the Alliance would need to take stock and decide what to do next. He had already heard proposals to modify certain provisions of the Constitution to facilitate electing a President. Lupu said

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categorically that he would oppose adopting a new Constitution. First of all, it would not be possible to produce a new draft, discuss it publicly, and hold a referendum all within a few months. Even more importantly, he said, it would send "an extremely bad message" both domestically and to foreign capitals, as it was not appropriate to "play" with the Constitution "in such a politicized fashion."

17. (C) Lupu continued that if the question of a new Constitution were put on the table, it would open a Pandora's box of proposals including introducing Russian as a second state language, eliminating neutrality, changing the status Gagauzia, and Transnistria's status, all of which could polarize Moldovan society. Lupu suggested that a new Constitution could not be introduced within a few months (as Ghimpu seemed to believe), and said that he would prefer a referendum on procedures for electing a President. Such a referendum could be either to change the number of votes required in Parliament to elect a President, or to introduce direct popular ballot for the President.

Lupu Wants Stronger Alliance Backing

18. (C) Democratic Party MP Andrei Popov, who accompanied Lupu (and who was appointed Deputy Foreign Minister the following day, on November 20), mentioned that the next two weeks would be the critical period for maximizing the chances of having a President. He said that he believed the Communists were trying to split the Alliance, and, revealing the frictions within the Alliance, suggested that the other coalition leaders were not active enough in backing Lupu.

Comment

19. (C) As the Alliance's candidate for President, Lupu is at the center of Moldova's current political drama. Should the vote fail, Moldova may see repeat parliamentary elections late in 2010, but we would also expect a heated debate over changing the Constitution or the presidential election rules. Lupu's feeling that Filat is not really on his side was evident in comments about the other Alliance leaders. Similarly, his criticism of the Acting President's proposal to adopt a new Constitution suggests ideological differences between the two.

CHAUDHRY